

Preliminary Amendment
International Application No. PCT/GB2005/000142
Attorney Docket No. 0078/01889

Amendments to the Specification

Insert a cover page prior to page 1 containing the following:

0078-01889

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION

EMERGENCY EVACUATION APPARATUS FOR A BED-RIDDEN PERSON

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Page 1

Immediately prior to heading titled “Description” insert the following:

A Certificate of Express Mailing

Lines 1-2, delete “TITLE” and “Emergency evacuation apparatus for a bed-ridden patient” and insert the following:

--CLAIM FOR FOREIGN PRIORITY

The present application claims foreign priority benefits of International Application No. PCT/GB2005/000142 filed 17 January 2005 which in turn claims priority from GB Application 0403968.1 filed 24 February 2004, each of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.--

Line 4, delete the heading “DESCRIPTION” and insert --BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION--;

Line 5, delete the heading “Technical Field” and insert --1. Field of the Invention--.

Line 10, delete the heading “Background Art” and insert --2. Background of the Invention--.

Page 2

Lines 17-26, replace the paragraph with the following amended paragraph:

The invention provides an emergency evacuation apparatus for use with an adjustable bed and for removing a bed-ridden person from the adjustable bed in an emergency situation, comprising a base tray having ~~at least one~~ three transverse fold lines to allow the base tray to bend as ~~two or more~~ four panels defining a backrest, an intermediate panel and a knee-break, the base tray being adapted to stay on top of the adjustable bed and bend along the ~~at least one~~ transverse fold lines when the profile of the adjustable bed is changed during normal use; and mechanical locking means operable between an unlocked condition in which the base tray is able to bend along the transverse fold lines and a locked condition in which the base tray is unable to bend along the transverse fold lines and to provide the base tray with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person.

Lines 28-32 and continuing on to page 3, lines 1-3, replace the paragraph with the following amended paragraph:

In normal use, the base tray is placed between the panels of an adjustable bed and the mattress. ~~The number and position of transverse fold lines will be selected so that the base tray has the same number of panels as the bed. For example, if the adjustable bed has four panels than the base tray will be provided with three transverse fold lines so that the base tray can bend as four panels.~~ The base tray will bend in register with the associated underlying panels of the adjustable bed but does not hinder the operation of the bed in any way. Preferably, the base tray has substantially the same width as the bed from which the person is to be evacuated.

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Lines 5-13, replace the paragraph with following amended paragraph:

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It is normally preferred that the mechanical locking means are operable in an emergency situation to lock the panels of the base tray in a co-planar configuration so that the bed-ridden person can be removed in a prone position. However, it is also possible that the mechanical locking means are operable to lock the panels of the base tray at any predetermined angle to each other. For example, ~~if the base tray has four panels then the three panels closest to the foot end of the emergency evacuation apparatus can be locked in a co-planar configuration but the fourth panel at the head end can be locked at a slight angle with respect to the plane of the remainder of the base tray to provide additional support by raising the person's back.~~

Lines 19-26, replace the paragraph with following amended paragraph:

The mechanical locking means can be of any suitable construction or type. For example, a rigid locking bolt can be made to slide across ~~the a~~ transverse fold line when the panels are co-planar. The locking bolt is preferably secured to the underside of one of the panels and can be received in an associated locking aperture provided on the underside of the other panel to prevent the base tray from bending along the transverse fold line. The locking bolt can also be slidably received in a pair of channels or sleeves on the underside of the base tray that extend on both sides of the transverse fold line.

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Lines 1-13, replace the paragraph with following amended paragraph:

~~If the base tray has more than one transverse fold line than separate~~ Separate mechanical locking means can be provided for each transverse fold line so that respective pairs of panels can be selectively locked together. Alternatively, a single mechanical locking means is provided. For example, a locking bolt can be slidably received in channels or sleeves on the underside of the base tray that extend on both sides of each transverse fold line. The locking bolt has a number of pivot regions that

are aligned with the transverse fold lines when the locking bolt is in the unlocked condition. In an emergency situation, the locking bolt can be made to slide when the panels are co-planar so that the pivot regions are no longer aligned with the transverse fold lines and rigid parts of the locking bolt next to the pivot regions extend across the transverse fold lines. If the pivot regions only allow the locking bolt to bend in one plane then the panels can be locked in position by rotating the locking bolt through 90°, for example.

Lines 19-27, replace the paragraph with following amended paragraph:

A number of u-shaped runners can be fixed to the underside of the base tray to improve the strength and rigidity of the two or more panels. The runners preferably extend longitudinally to define a pair of parallel channels into which the wheels, glide members, roller balls or castors can be fitted. The runners do not extend across the ~~at least one~~ transverse fold lines and their ends can be cut away or profiled so that they do not prevent the panels of the base tray from bending relative to each other. Strips of high-density foam can be fixed to the underside of the base tray along its edges and between the runners to help support the base tray on top of the panels of the adjustable bed.

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Lines 25-27, delete this paragraph in its entirety.

After line 27, please insert the following new paragraphs:

One embodiment of the present invention relates to an emergency evacuation apparatus for use with an adjustable bed and adapted to remove a bed-ridden person from the adjustable bed in an emergency situation. The apparatus comprises a base tray (made of polypropylene for example) and mechanical locking means (one or more rigid locking bolts for example) and has three transverse fold lines allowing the base tray to bend as four panels defining a backrest, an intermediate panel and a knee-break. The base tray is

adapted to stay on top of the adjustable bed and bend along the transverse fold lines when the profile of the adjustable bed is changed during normal use. The mechanical locking means is operable between an unlocked condition, in which the base tray is able to bend along the transverse fold lines, and a locked condition, in which the base tray is unable to bend along the transverse fold lines, providing the base tray with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person.

Another embodiment relates to a combination of an adjustable bed having a plurality of panels that can bend relative to each other and an emergency evacuation apparatus for removing a bed-ridden person from the adjustable bed in an emergency situation. The emergency evacuation apparatus comprises a base tray and mechanical locking means. The base tray has a plurality of transverse fold lines allowing the base tray to bend as a plurality of panels. The mechanical locking means is operable between an unlocked condition, in which the base tray is able to bend along the transverse fold lines in register with the underlying panels of the adjustable bed, and a locked condition, in which the base tray is unable to bend along the transverse fold lines, providing the base tray with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person. The adjustable bed may have a tail board including rollers or fixed projections for engagement with runners fixed to the underside of the base tray assisting in the removal of the emergency of the emergency evacuation apparatus from the adjustable bed.

Yet another embodiment relates to a method of evacuating a bed-ridden person from an adjustable bed having a plurality of panels that can bend relative to each other using an emergency evacuation apparatus. The method comprises the steps of operating the adjustable bed with a mechanical locking means in an unlocked position, and bending panels of a base tray along transverse fold lines in register with underlying panels of the adjustable bed until the panels of the base tray lie in the same plane or at a predetermined angle to each other. A mechanical locking means is operated from an unlocked condition to a locked condition so that the base tray is unable to bend along

the transverse fold lines providing the base tray with sufficient longitudinal rigidity to support the weight of an adult person.

In at least one embodiment, an underside of the base tray of the emergency evacuation apparatus is provided with wheels, glide members, roller balls or castors to facilitate its movement over the floor, where the wheels, glide members, roller balls or castors are fitted in channels on the underside of the base tray. Additionally, u-shaped runners may be fixed to the underside of the base tray into which the wheels, glide members, roller balls or castors are fitted. The base tray may include straps secured thereto for wrapping around the person in an emergency situation to restrain the person. The straps may be provided with snap-fit couplings which permit the straps to be connected together to encircle the person prior to tightening the straps.

Still other embodiments may comprise the base tray having two longitudinal folds lines defining a central panel supporting the person, and two side panels that can be bent out of the plane of the central panel by the straps. The transverse and longitudinal fold lines may be hydraulically pressed into the base tray.

In yet other embodiments, the emergency evacuation apparatus may include carrying handles secured to the sides of the base tray and least one (one or more) strip of foam fixed to an underside of the base tray. The base tray and the adjustable bed may have the same number of panels and be substantially the same width as the adjustable bed.

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Line 1, delete the heading "Drawings" and insert --DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS--.

Line 18, insert the heading --DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION--.